

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OVIP (DUNSTAN, DON), EMIN, ENRG, AS
SUBJECT: PREMIER DUNSTAN MAY REMOVE BAN ON URANIUM MINING IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

RE: A) STATE 101758, B) 77 CANBERRA A-046, C) 76 CANBERRA 4839

1. IT WAS RECENTLY REPORTE IN THE AUSTRALIAN PRESS AND VERBALLY BY MINING OFFICIAL TO THE REGINAL RESOURCES ATTACHE, THAT SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PREMIER DON DUNSTAN IS CONSIDERING HOLDING A STATE REFERENDUM ON THE QUESTION OF URANIUM MINING AND MILLING IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

2. IN MARCH 1977, DUNSTAN ANNOUNCED, IN OPPOSITION TO HIS CABINET ADVISORS, THAT SOUTH AUSTRALIA WOULD NOT ALLOW THE MINING AND ENRICHMENT OF URANIM IN THE STATE UNTIL SUCH TIME THAT NUCLEAR SAFEGUARDS ISSUES HAVE BEEN ADQUATELY EALT WITH (REF B). DUNSTAN ALSO STATED THE URANIUM POLICY COULD BE REVIEWED AT A LATER DATE.

3. DUNSTAN'S MARCH 1977 DECISION WAS IN COMPLETE OPPOSITION TO HIS ANNOUNCEMENT IN FEBRUARY 1976 THAT SOUTH
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AUSTRALIA WAS DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF URANIUM PROCESSING AND ENRICHMENT FACILITY IN THE STATE BASED ON CENTRIFUGE TECHNOOOGY (REF C).

4. COMMENT: DUNSTAN'S 1977 DECISION TO BAN URANIUM MINING APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN ONE OF POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY. AS INDICATED, DUNSTAN PREVIOUSLY FAVORED URANIUM MINING AND

PROECSSING. HOWEVER, HE ANNOUNCED A SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BAN ON URANIUM MINING IN OPPOSITION TO HIS PREVIOUSLY HELD POSITION BECAUSE HE KNEW THAT THE LEFT HAD ENOUGH VOTES LINED UP AT THE FEDERAL AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY (ALP) CONFERENCE (HELD IN PERTH IN LATE JUNE 1977) TO DECLARE A NATIONWIDE ALP BAN ON URANIUM MINING UNTIL PROBLEMS OF SAFEGUARDS AND DISPOSAL WERE ADEQUATELY RESOLVED. LATER IN 1977, THE ACTU CALLED FOR A NATIONWIDE REFERENDUM ON URANIUM MINING WHICH THE L/NCP COALITION GOVERNMENT HAS REFUSED. DUNSTAN'S REFERENDUM WOULD THUS BE CONSISTENT WITH THE ACTU'S POSITION BUT ON A STATE LEVEL.

5. ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT IF A STATE REFERENDUM ON URANIUM MINING WERE HELD IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA IT WOULD PASS. IF THE ELECTORATE APPROVED URANIUM DEVELOPMENT, PREMIER DUNSTAN WOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE ABIDING BY THAT DECISION. A SUCCESSFUL REFERENDUM WOULD SERVE TO GET HIM OFF THE HOOK WITH THE LARGELY LEFT-WING MEMBERS OF HIS OWN PARTY WHO ARE OPPOSED. HE IS CERTAINLY AWARE OF THE NEED FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA TO BRING ON SOME ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IF THE STATE IS TO GROW ECONOMICALLY. THE LARGEST POTENTIAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE STATE IS WESTERN MINING CORP'S ROXBY DOWNS COPPER-URANIUM VENTURE. IN FACT, ROXBY DOWNS HAS THE POTENTIAL OF BEING ONE OF THE LARGEST OPEN CUT MINES IN THE WORLD. SOME HAVE SUGGESTED THAT THE OREBODY COULD ENABLE A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MINING RATE OF ONE MILLION TONS OF ORE PER MONTH. ASSAY FIGURES SO FAR INDICATE THIS WOULD YIELD ABOUT 150,000 TONS OF COPPER AND 6,000 TONS OF URANIUM PER YEAR. ALSTON

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